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## House of Representatives

The House met at 9 a.m. and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. COSTA).

### DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Speaker:

WASHINGTON, DC,

May 15, 2007.

I hereby appoint the Honorable JIM COSTA to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

NANCY PELOSI,

*Speaker of the House of Representatives.*

### MORNING-HOUR DEBATE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 4, 2007, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning-hour debate. The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties, with each party limited to not to exceed 25 minutes, and each Member, except the majority leader, the minority leader, or the minority whip, limited to not to exceed 5 minutes, but in no event shall debate extend beyond 9:50 a.m.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. MCGOVERN) for 5 minutes.

### TAKING THE FOOD STAMP CHALLENGE

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, this week, I am joined by three of my esteemed colleagues, Congresswoman JO ANN EMERSON from Missouri, Congressman TIM RYAN from Ohio and Congresswoman JAN SCHAKOWSKY from Illinois, in taking the Food Stamp Challenge.

The Food Stamp Challenge is an initiative begun by nonprofit and religious community groups. Public officials agree to live on a food stamp

budget for 1 week in order to raise awareness of the food stamp program and the inadequacy of the current benefit. Under the Food Stamp Challenge, we will only be allowed to eat food totaling \$21 for the week, \$3 a day, or \$1 per meal, which is the national average food stamp benefit. In other words, no lattes at Starbucks, no organic chicken at home and no wine or shrimp at receptions this week.

Yesterday, Congresswoman EMERSON and I went grocery shopping at the Capitol Hill Safeway for the week. However, she was a more efficient shopper than I was. While she made it through the checkout line in 30 minutes, it took me almost an hour and a half to find food that fit my budget, and that was even with the much-appreciated assistance of Ms. Toinette Wilson, a DC food stamp recipient, who assisted my wife Lisa and me with our shopping.

Oregon Governor Ted Kulongoski successfully took the challenge with his wife a few weeks ago, and Utah Governor John Huntsman, Jr., is currently living on a food stamp budget with his household of eight. In New York City, where over 1 million people depend on food stamps each month, New York City Councilman Eric Gioia is participating in the Food Stamp Challenge.

This diverse group of public leaders who all feel compelled to take on this challenge demonstrates the importance of the food stamp program for all Americans: from California to Massachusetts, Michigan to Texas, Republican and Democrat, urban and rural, the food stamp program represents the moral values of America: compassion, thoughtfulness and community spirit.

Mr. Speaker, I am taking this Food Stamp Challenge as a way of saying that as Americans, we need to do more to eliminate hunger and poverty in this country. One in nine U.S. households, nearly 36 million Americans, does not

consistently have enough food to feed themselves or their families according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. There is no excuse for this.

In the wealthiest country on earth, it is not about finding the resources. It is about mustering the political will.

Established in 1939, the food stamp program helps families in need buy food so that they do not have to make difficult choices, such as choosing between paying a utility bill, addressing health care needs or buying food. It truly is the safety net for America's hungry.

Despite what some critics like to say, the food stamp program is not a government handout, but it is a true safety net program that provides access to food for people who cannot afford to choose between rent, medicine, child care and transportation. Gone are the days of the inefficient program ravaged by fraud, waste and abuse. In fact, National Journal recently named the food stamp program as one of the government's top successes. And the GAO has repeatedly reported on the successes of this important program.

Mr. Speaker, let me take a moment to share with you who benefits from the food stamp program. According to USDA, over 26 million people benefited from the food stamp program last year, including 452,000 individuals from my State of Massachusetts. Over 80 percent of food stamp benefits go to families with children. One in five food stamp households has an elderly family member, and one in four has a disabled member. Increasingly, working families must rely on food stamps to supplement their wages in low-paying jobs.

Some may question the motives of elected officials taking this 1-week challenge. These critics, Mr. Speaker, are missing the point. It's time for a much greater public debate to take place around this issue. It is time to end hunger in America, and we can do

☐ This symbol represents the time of day during the House proceedings, e.g., ☐ 1407 is 2:07 p.m.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.



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